

## **Washington State Department of Transportation - NEWS**

Olympia Headquarters - PO Box 47322 - Olympia, WA 98504-7322 - (360) 705-7075

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 02, 2009**

Contacts: Lloyd Brown, Communications Director, 360-705-7076

### **35th edition of Gray Notebook includes annual Congestion Report, air and noise quality reports, and other performance reporting**

OLYMPIA – A combination of higher fuel prices, the economic recession, and the completion of numerous WSDOT congestion-relief projects helped reduce congestion on state highways in 2008. Analysis comparing 2008 to 2006 travel times showed that average peak travel times improved on 30 of the surveyed high-demand commute routes in the central Puget Sound. Reliability also improved in 2008, as commuters on 26 of the surveyed high-demand routes in the Puget Sound area saw improvements in ‘95 percent reliable travel times’; they shaved between one and 16 minutes from their daily drives.

Statewide, drivers spent nearly one hour less on average in congestion than they had in 2006. The hours drivers lost, per capita, to delay on the highways declined by 16 percent, and the estimated economic costs of delay also declined by 13 percent.

Compared to 2006, when a dozen Nickel- and TPA-funded highway mobility projects had been completed, a total of 46 such projects were completed and open to motorists by the end of 2008. WSDOT analyzes congestion data from a two-year period (2006 and 2008) to more accurately identify trends and changes that might be missed in direct year-to-year comparisons. The Gray Notebook contains an executive summary of the annual congestion report, which for the first time, is a separate publication. The full congestion report can be found online at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Accountability/Congestion/2009.htm>.

This edition also includes annual reports on Air and Noise Quality issues, and an update on roadside safety improvement projects.

WSDOT provides quarterly updates in every edition of the GNB on worker safety, workforce levels and training, highway incident response, Washington State Ferries, Amtrak *Cascades*, and project delivery. The September 30, 2009, edition is now available on the WSDOT website: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability).

Other performance highlights include:

- More than 160 Recovery Act highway projects were awarded to contractors by the end of September, including 47 that were completed. Washington State and local government agencies are working quickly to spend the \$492 million in highway and \$179 million in transit funds the state received. Employment numbers show workers on Recovery Act-funded projects logged nearly 281,000 labor hours in September, compared to just under 58,000 hours in June.
- As of September 30, 2009, WSDOT has delivered a total of 215 Nickel and Transportation Partnership Account (TPA) projects valued at \$3.274 billion, on target with the funding provided in the 2009-11 Transportation Budget. This edition of the GNB also includes a wrap up of capital project delivery in the 2007-2009 biennium.
- High Occupancy Tolling (HOT) also aids in congestion relief. HOT lanes have been in operation on SR 167 for more than a year, and continue to show faster travel times by maintaining average travel speeds of 45 mph 99.2 percent of the time, benefiting carpools, vanpools, transit, and those individual drivers who opt to pay the toll to use the lanes.
- Construction on the new 64-auto ferry is on schedule and on budget, as the contractors work to complete the structural assembly of the hull, vessel sides, and other components.